

# Are we allowed to say Bismillâh before Wudū'?

**Taken from Shaykh Sulayman ibn Nasir al-‘Alwan**

Note: The Scholars define "Tasmiyah" as saying "Bismillâh" & define "Basmalah" as saying "Bismillâhi al-Rahmāni al-Rahīm", generally this is okay.

With regards to saying "Bismillâh" before Wudū', the scholars differed upon the following opinions:

1. That it's obligatory & this is what's popular in the Madhab of Imām Ahmad, a narration from the Madhab of Imām Mālik (رحمه الله).
2. That it's recommended & this is what's popular in the Madhab of Imām Abū Hanīfah, al-Shāfi'ī & Mālik, also a narration in the Hanbalī madhab as it was held by ibn Qudāmah (رحمه الله) & this is the view of the Majority of the Scholars.
3. That it's not prescribed at all, infact it is a Bid'ah, and this is a narration from Imām Mālik (رحمه الله), which was mentioned by Imām ibn Rushd (رحمه الله) & others.

With regards to the Ahādīth on the topic, the Scholars also differed upon the following:

1. It is authentic, Imām Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybāh (رحمه الله) said "It has been proven to us that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said it" [Refer to al-Talkhees al-Habeer by Ibn Hajr (1/257)] and several scholars that came after him followed this.
2. It is Hassan by supportive evidence. A group of scholars such as al-Mundhirī (رحمه الله) & ibn Kathir (رحمه الله) & others viewed that it was Hassan by strengthening the weak chains of narrations.
3. It is weak according to the Majority [of the Muhadditheen]. **Imām Abū 'Īsa al-Tirmidhi** (رحمه الله) said "There's not a single authentic Hadīth in this topic"

**Imām al-'Uqaylī** (رحمه الله) said "The chains of narration in this chapter are all Lîn [have weakness]"

**Refer to al-Du'afā' by al-'Uqaylī (222).**

**Imām Ibn al-Mundhir** (رحمه الله) said: "There's not a single authentic report in this topic"

**Refer to al-Awsat by Ibn al-Mundhir (345)**

**Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal** (رحمه الله) also said "There's not a single authentic Hadīth in this topic"

**Refer to Masā'il al-Imām Ahmad by al-Kūsaj (2/263)**

Shaykh Sulaymān al-'Alwān (حفظه الله) says the Majority of the early Scholars of Hadīth are of the view that "There's not a single authentic hadīth in this topic"

How do we reconcile between Imām Ahmad's statement "It is Wājib" & "There's not a single authentic Hadīth in this topic", Shaykh Sulaymān al-'Alwān (حفظه الله) stated that it's possible that Imām Ahmad (رحمه الله) authenticated the Hadīths by strengthening its weak chains of

narration, but later on, he retracted this view & clearly saw the weakness of the chains & said "There's not a single authentic Hadīth in this topic"

Imām al-Bukhārī (رحمه الله) did not authenticate the Hadīths, however he viewed that it's permissible to say Bismillāh before wudū' based upon Qiyās[analogy], and he used the Hadīth where a person says Bismillāh before having relations with his wife, so he mentioned that it would be more deserving to say it before Wudū'.

However Shaykh Sulaymān al-'Alwān (حفظه الله) said the Qiyās of Imām al-Bukhārī (رحمه الله) is questionable because if this was the case, then we would have to say Bismillāh before the Takbīrāt at Hajj, and before we say the Adhān, and before we say Allāhu Akbar for Salāh, however no one has said this.

Also, to support the view that it's not prescribed to say Bismillāh before Wudū' is that it's not Authentic from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) nor the Sahābah (رضي الله عنهم), and not a single Sahābī who described the Wudū' of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) mentioned that he said "Bismillāh", but rather they mentioned things which are of less importance.

You can do further research into the Authentic agreed upon narrations in Bukhārī & Muslim, such as the Hadīth of 'Uthmān (رضي الله عنه), 'Abdillāh ibn Zayd (رضي الله عنه) and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنهما), they all described the wudū' of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) without mentioning that he said Bismillāh, and these Hadīths are Muttāfaqu 'Alayh, so if the Basmillāh was memorized from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the Sahābah would have mentioned this and explained it to us, but all the Hadīths that describe the Wudū' of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) mention that he didn't say Bismillāh.

For example, ponder over this Hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari (1934):

Narrated Humran: I saw `Uthman performing ablution; he washed his hands thrice, rinsed his mouth and then washed his nose, by putting water in it and then blowing it out, and washed his face thrice, and then washed his right forearm up to the elbow thrice, and then the left-forearm up to the elbow thrice, then smeared his head with water, washed his right foot thrice, and then his left foot thrice and said, "I saw Allah's Apostle performing ablution similar to my present ablution, and then he said, 'Whoever performs ablution like my present ablution and then offers two rak`at in which he does not think of worldly things, all his previous sins will be forgiven.'"

The Hadith of `Uthman is considered the most authentic and strongest Hadith describing the wudu' of the Prophet, and here he mentions that all your previous sins will be forgiven if you perform wudu' like he did, and there was no mentioning of the Basmallah, so if it was really recommended, or even compulsory, the Sahabah would've mentioned it through authentic chains.

NOTE: Even though I go along the view of the Shaykh & don't believe it's prescribed to say Bismillāh before wudū' as this is an act of worship & it requires authentic evidence, there's no blame upon an individual for following the opinion of a Mujtahid that he trusts والله اعلم

"**Mālik** denounced saying Bismillāh before wudū', and said: I haven't heard of this, does he intend to make a sacrifice?" [1]

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[1] Refer to "al-Tāj wal-iklīl" (1/347) and Refer to al-Dhakhīrah by al-Qarāfī (1/284) and "Hāshiyat al-'Adawī" (1/181): And some Scholars did not view beginning [wudū'] with saying Bismillāh as an ordainment of Good according to the Salaf, rather they saw it as an ordainment of Munkar.